DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 305 548 CG 021 558

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TITLE The Importance of Human Relations Education for Promotion of Health and Well-Being among People and Nations of the World.
PUB DATE Aug 88
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the International Council of Psychologists (46th, Singapore, August 21-25, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cross Cultural Training; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Health Promotion; *Humanistic Education; *Human Relations; Psychology; Social Integration; *Well Being
IDENTIFIERS *Turkey

ABSTRACT

Although psychosocial problems have always been a source of concern for mankind, with the vast sociocultural changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and lately by telecommunication technology, psychosocial issues have become the crucial issue of our time. The increasing complexity of conditions under which people live and work today leads more and more to interpersonal frictions, delinquency, mental illnesses, and alienation of persons and groups from one another. Therefore youth and people in general need to be trained in the skills of interpersonal relations, both in regard to personal growth and for the enhancement of society. A deeper education must be sought than has been provided by the traditional school systems. The function of education should not be limited to imparting knowledge or cultivating intelligence alone. But concurrent with these, schools should be concerned with the social and emotional aspects of development emphasizing the development of interpersonal skills. The major aim should be better self-understanding and more awareness of interpersonal relations. Youth can be helped by counseling services in schools, sensitivity training in schools to foster good human relations between individuals, and teaching of psychology in schools with emphasis on life adjustment. (Author/ABL)

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THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONS EDUCATION FOR PROMOTION OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AMONG PEOPLE AND NATIONS OF THE WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Although psycho-social problems have always been a source of concern for mankind, with the vast socio-cultural changes brought about by Industrial Revolution and lately by telecommunication technology, these became the crucial issue of our time. The increasing complexity of conditions under which people live and work today, leads more and more to interpersonal frictions, delinquence, mental illnesses and alienation of persons and groups from one another. Therefore youth and people at large, need to be trained in the skills of interpersonal relations, both in regard to personal growth and for the enhancement of society. A deeper education must be sought than has been provided by the traditional school systems. The function of education should not be limited to imparting of knowledge or cultivating intelligence alone. But concurrent with these, schools should be concerned with the social and emotional aspects of developoment emphasizing the development of interpersonal skills. The major aim should be better self understanding and more awareness of interpersonal relations. Some measures are suggested to help achieve the goals mentioned above.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONS EDUCATION FOR PROMOTION OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AMONG PEOPLE AND NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Paper prepared by Feriha Baymur
The International Council of Psychologists
Read at the Singapore Convention, August 1988

As is apparent from the title of my paper, I wish to dwell on the importance of the human relations issue and the need of people and nations to be more aware of their interactions with one another. It is the most intricate, the most involved, yet the most important issue of our era. And we should be more aware that people at large need to be enlightened in this area both for better personel growth as well as for the enhancement of society.

Human relations or interpersonal relations as they are sometimes called, which involve all sorts of verbal and non-verbal communication between persons and groups of people, are very complex in nature. The aim of communication is to arrive at some common understanding, to share an idea or thought, to get across a feeling or emotion, to make others understand your needs or intentions. When these are totally or partially apprehended by the other party, then a communication event has occurred. Yet communication events are often approximated, more than achieved. A lot of misperceptions occur which may lead to grave miseries and turmoil at personal or societal levels.

I take human relations issue at its broader scope which may roughly be observed at four levels. these are designated as: (1) the <u>intrapersonal</u> level wherein realations occur within the person, (2) the <u>interpersonal</u> relations, when sending and receiving of messages occurs between two persons, (3)the <u>intragroup</u> level when interaction occurs within a group of known persons, (4) the <u>intergroup</u> level when the interaction is between groups, such as national, ethnic and between man and woman, employer and employee groups.

These levels are interrelated and interdependant. The intrapersonal level seems to be the core of human relations. If the communication within the person is broken down, as in the case of neurotic or maladjusted persons, his/her communication with others will also be damaged. In the "neurotic" individual, some feelings or emotions, some organismic tendencies become blocked off from the conscious mind. Consequently, some discrepancies that arise between thinking, feeling and action, the incongruence between actual experience and self-concept, the inconsistencies between real feelings and pretensions will distort the way the person communicates with others as well as himself. Such a person will not feel comfortable within "self" and will not be able to function well in society. If good communication is achieved within "self" the person will be able to act and communicate more freely and effectively with

others.(1)

The reverse is true,too. Human relations at group or societal levels impinge upon intrapersonal events. For the person carries the stamp of the different groups he/she belongs to, and is subject to many prejudices that exist between nations or the certain groups he/she belongs to. The term "human relations" thus encompasses all these four levels interrelatedly. Free communication which fosters good human relations within and between individuals and groups, is always growth promoting for persons and societies.

Human relations closely connected with psycho-social problems have always been a source of concern for mankind over the years. But with the vast and ever accelerating socio-cultural changes brought about by Industrial Revolution, these became the crucial issue of our time. The Industrial Revolution (1750-1850), which may be described as a 'welding' of scientific knowledge with technology, transformed the structure of society. Factories and industrial towns sprang up. Progress made in transportation led to mobility of the population. Migration from rural to urban areas led to urbanization of countries. External migrations as well as internal became a mode of living, especially in the developing countries. The accelerated pattern of transportation shortened the distance between the far corners of the world and thus facilitated the intermingling of cultures.

All these changes proved to be a blessing to mankind. It led to material riches and prosperity, division of labor and organizational efficiency, replacement of human labor by machines and more leisure time to enjoy. Today we are witnessing an offshoot of the Industrial Revolution, a new form of media spreading throughout the world inducing new changes in our lives. Namely, telecommunication technology, called by some revolution in itself: communications and information revolution. This makes possible instantaneous delivery of knowledge throughout the world leading to improved co-ordination and management, and productivity in all sections of industry. Homes, schools and work places are rapidly being invaded by computers, and all sorts of electronic devices.(2)

All these developments, certainly beneficial to humankind have their negative aspects, too. For instance, in the case of urbanization, with advanced facilities of transportation, it is certainly advantageous for some rural people to migrate from villages to larger cities. They get better paying jobs, all the privileges that go with urbanized life, such as better schooling for their children. They enjoy all the infrastructural services and various cultural activities provided in the cities. Thus they embark on a higher level of living conditions. It is almost the same with external migrations,too. Some people from the lower brackets of society migrate to more advanced and industrialized countries in search of higher wages, so that they can have a better chance of raising their families and actualizing their

potentialities. As is true of internal migrants,to a greater degree exrternal migrants are faced with new experiences, new ways of living, new points of view and new value systems. Living in more urbanized and highly industrialized communities certainly makes life more comfortable for people in many ways, but deprives them in certain other respects. The traditional values face the challenge of erosion. Especially elderly people find themselves deprived of their traditions. In their new environment they suffer from a breakdown in primary controls, their interpersonal and intragroup relations seem to get disrupted, especially with younger people. As adults they no longer can serve them as the hero-models.

Youth in turn are bewildered,too . In a fast changing society, they are faced with multiple moral concepts, ideological conflicts and contradictory value systems, which are prompted and/or augmented by mass media communication. These conditions put youth in a stressful, strained situation, perhaps more so than adults. They feel confused and uncertain of their future, perplexed about their identity and about what their role in life should be. They do not consider their parents as up-to-date models. The parents' expectations, judgements and ideals may not be meaningful in such a fast changing soceity.

Certainly there are many other psycho-social problems such as delinquency, addiction, mental illnesses and escalating terrorism in the world which comes from changes due to urbanization, industrialization and increase in mass media that the scope of this paper does not permit me to elaborate on. But I do wish to emphasize the fact that most of these, seem to hinge on the human factor, involve human relations. The increasing complexities under which people live and work today, leads more and more to interpersonal frictions. It is paradoxical to note that especially in urban areas where people live closer in physical proximity, the psychological distance between them seems to be increasing.. Alienation constitutes one of the most common ailments of our day. Alienation of people from one another, young from old, man from woman. Alienation of persons from their families and from their culture, and worst of all, alienation of persons from their own self.

Considering also the ongoing wars within and between nations, the confrontation of ideologies, the confrontations of generations and races, and a possibility of a nuclear war hanging over us 'like an ominous cloud '(3) which may at anytime be triggered accidentally as well as intentionally; it seems to be high time that human relations education be emphasized as one of the most important concerns of educational endeavour. It has been pointed out that economic prosperity and political democracy per se have not been enough to help people overcome the many kinds of problems we are facing now. As the late eminent psychologist Rogers points out:

"The future of civilization may depend on finding of the solutions to psychological problems. It is a truism that man has

made great progress in solving many of the material problems of his existence, but that may well be defeated, and perhaps annihilated by his failure to solve the psychological problems which face him - transpersonal, interracial, international frictions, delinquency, mental illness, growing loss of a sense of purpose... Obviously this situation constitutes a challenge to psychology and other behavioral sciences."(4)

So as psychologists and responsible world citizens it seems imperative for us to reconsider and re-examine educational goals and procedures. In rapidly changing pluralistic democracies it no longer suffices to aim at simply turning out well-informed, intelligent citizens from schools. Youth must be given help to develop authentic personalities (with ego strenth in Freudian terms) who can achieve a more realistic acceptance of themselves and a realistic appraisal of their situation.

In the traditional school systems which still seems to prevail around the world to a large extent, teachers at large consider themselves mainly as imparters of knowledge. We fail to see that probably in the near future a large bulk of information or knowledge will be transmitted to students via advanced electronic devises,i.e.learning machines. Traditional education gives too little attention to the all-around development of pupils. It seems to ignore the emotional, the social and personal aspects of human nature. It has also ignored the fact that learning is not a purely intellectual process; that it is affected by the total state of the individual - physical, mental and emotional.

Today, under the stressful conditions youth live in, and in a milieu of intensive propoganda emanating from different sources, it is absolutely necessary that they be helped to develop well integrated strong personalities, capable and free to make responsible choices.

This calls for a better and deeper kind of education than has been provided before. The function of edcation should not be limited to imparting of knowledge and cultivating intelligence alone. But concurrent with the teaching of subject matter it should be concerned with the emotional and social aspects of development.

This will best be realized by emphasizing the aim of self-knowledge in education. This is a pivotal issue in personality development and human relations. Both clinical observation and research evidence show that there is a definite and a substantial correlation between the way we feel about ourselves and the way we feel about others. (4), (5), (6), (7). Individuals who hold negative feelings toward themselves tend to hold negative feelings toward other people in general and vice versa; that is, if we cannot understand, accept and respect ourselves, we will not be able to understand, accept and respect others. This explains why intrapersonal relations constitute the core of human relations. One cannot help but be astounded at the insightfulness of Socrates to have formulated his well-known

tenet "know thyself" so many centuries ago, as the basic aim of education.

Now, how to go about helping youth to achieve more positive mental health? What needs to be done or what changes should be emphasized in education so that the students can best actualize their potentialities and function optimally in their respective groups? I would like to make a few suggestions.

One of them concerns counseling services in schools. Since the early part of the 20th century we note the gradual inclusion of various services for students in schools, such as testing programs, orientation weeks, occupational information courses, remedial teaching laboratories and later on psychological counseling units. These significant developments were part and parcel of a movement which lead to programs in schools variably called counseling or guidance programs, or student personnel services. The inclusion of these services helped to remedy the imbalances of traditional education -that is, its overemphasis on teaching subject matter and its giving too little attention to tending the psycho-social developmental needs of students. It remedies this situation by providing services, which contribute to the physical, emotional and social development of individual students as well as their intellectual development. These services which are non-instructional in nature are usually provided outside the classroom by professionally trained personnel. I do not know how the counseling, guidance or student personnel services are being operated throughout the world at large. But if they are being operated as mediocrely -not to say poorly - as in my country, then they are in need of a great boost. These services should be sustained if they are in good shape and certainly supported and encouraged by governments, by public and private organizations. They should be well equipped, better funded and especially better provided with well-trained personnel. But whether functioning poorly or well, I believe that they are in to stay in our contemporary era. Because they seem to be meeting the growing multidimensional needs of youth due to the stressful conditions of rapid technological and socio-cultural changes.

My second suggestion would be to include programs in schools,possibly at all levels, which aim at'sensitivity training' to foster good human relations between individuals (at intrapersonal, interpersonal and intragroup levels).(8) In these programs small group counseling experiences are provided to aid students in becoming more aware of themselves and the manner in which they affect others, and in turn are affected by others. It was Kurt Lewin who, several decades ago (in 1940's) developed the idea that training in human relations and skills was an important but overlooked type of education in modern society. Later on, from Lewin's teachings his students attempted to resolve asocial problems by group action. The model they developed became knowm as T-group and laboratory method, which proved to be very effective in alleviating social frictions and teaching more constructive interpersonal relations. Since then,

various types of groups have proliferated and became known by variety of names such as sensitivity training groups, encounter groups, laboratory groups and etc. These groups if conducted professionally, proved to be a very potent factor, a vehicle in increasing self-awareness and enhancing knowledge of dynamics of interpersonal relations; much more so than the conventional classroom teaching. They also seem to lessen alienations by generating meaningful relationships between people and fostering positive feelings.

Thirdly, I would like to suggest a more effective teaching of psychology in schools, preferably starting at a lower stage of education. It should be taught with emphasis on life adjustment aside from providing the pupil with information about the science of psychology. Research evidence indicates that psychology can be taught effectively not only at high school level but even at the elementary level. It has been shown that children can study and learn concepts and techniques of psychology long before college level.(9) It has been pointed out that very little in psychology could not be presented ,at least, in an introductory fashion, if the manner of presentation fitted their interests and developmental level.(10), (11) Research evidence has also indicated experiential programs in psychology at that level, promoted ego development and self-understanding. At the end of the programs, researchers observed noticeable decreases in conflicts, and increased levels of warm, open intrapersonal relationships ocurring in the experimental group. (9)

In conclusion, I wish to re-state, in short, that the human relations issue, closely knit with psycho-social problems of our day, is of paramount importance.This is now facing humanity and should be a real concern of public education. This could be tended by (a) enhancing counseling, guidace and student personnel programs in schools, (b) including human relations seminars and small group counseling experiences in the curriculi of schools, (c) reinforcing effective teaching of psychology preferably starting at lower levels of schooling than is being done today. I also wish to emphasize that these considerations are more important for the developing nations undergoing modernization than for the more stabilized western democracies, largely because the former are going through more drastic changes in a shorter period of time.

I wish to end this paper by citing a stanza from a humanist Turkish poet Yunus Emre who lived in the 13 th century.

Science is wisdom
Wisdom is self-knowledge
If thou dost not know thyself
What good is education?

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